

Appl. No. 09/973,624
Amdt. dated December 30, 2003
Reply to Office Action of July 2, 2003

Remarks:

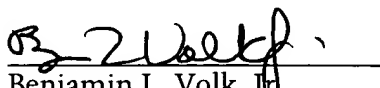
Pending in this application at the time of the outstanding Office Action were claims 1-28 and 51-70. The Office Action allowed claims 67-70 and identified claims 2-20, 25-28, 55-60, and 65-66 as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. By this amendment, Applicant hereby (1) cancels claims 1, and 51-54 without prejudice, (2) amends claims 2, 28, and 55 into independent form by expressly incorporating the limitations of the antecedent claims, (3) amends claim 16 to properly identify the claim from which it depends, and (4) adds new dependent claims 80-100. Applicant reserves the right to pursue canceled claims 1 and 51-54 through a continuation application. No new matter is added by this amendment. New claims 80-100 recite the limitations of original claims 3, 7, and 9-27 respectively.

Applicant respectfully submits that, by amending claim 16 to depend from claim 15, the §112 rejection of claim 16 has been overcome. Further, by this amendment, all of the independent claims now pending in this application are claims that have been identified as reciting allowable subject matter in the outstanding Office Action. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is in condition for allowance.

Lastly, with respect to the withdrawal of claims 21-24 and 61-64 following Applicant's *provisional* election of the "metal" species and "salt" species, Applicant respectfully requests that further examination for these withdrawn claims proceed in accordance with MPEP §803.02.

Favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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